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Under the Dock Leaves,
by Richard Doyle.



SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

BY

WALTER DE LA MARE

(WALTER RAMAL)

WITH FRONTISPICE

NEW EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN; AND CO.

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1916

TO JILL

NOTE

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD was first published in 1902. In this new edition one or two poems have been omitted; there are a few new ones; and what is common to both volumes has been here and there revised.

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SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

SLEEPYHEAD

As I lay awake in the white moon light,
I heard a faint singing in the wood,

‘ Out of bed,
Sleepyhead,
Put your foot, and come away ;
Clear peeps the moonbeam,
Abloom is the may ;
Leave your sleep and with the fairies
Come, child, and play ! ’

I looked out of window, in the white moon light,
The leaves were like snow in the wood—

‘ Listen, O listen,
Music is falling ;
Tiny lanterns clash and glisten ;
Voices are calling ;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

Far, far the blue air shakes ;
Hov'ring and winging,
Float we in light and shadow,
Singing—singing.'

Softly I stooped in the dim moon light
To put on my stocking and my shoe,
But the sweet shrill singing echoed faintly away,
And the grey of the morning peeped through,
And the voices that called me were blackbird
and robin,
Astir in the twilight and dew.

A-TISHOO

‘ SNEEZE, Pretty, sneeze, Dainty,
Else the Elves will have you sure,
Sneeze, Light-of-Seven-Bright-Candles,
See they’re tipping at the door ;
Their wee feet in measure falling,
All their little voices calling,
Calling, calling, calling, calling—
Sneeze, or never come no more ! ’

‘ A-tishoo ! ’

BLUEBELLS

WHERE the bluebells and the wind are,
Fairies in a ring I spied,
And I heard a little linnet
Singing near beside.

Where the primrose and the dew are—
Soon were sped the fairies all :
Only now the green turf freshens,
And the linnets call.

LOVELOCKS

I WATCHED the Lady Caroline
Bind up her dark and beauteous hair ;
Her face was rosy in the glass,
And 'twixt the coils her hands would pass,
 White in the candleshine.

Her bottles on the table lay,
Stoppered, yet sweet of violet ;
Her image in the mirror stooped
To view those locks as lightly looped
 As cherry-boughs in May.

The snowy night lay dim without,
I heard the Waits their sweet song sing ;
The window smouldered keen with frost ;
Yet still she twisted, sleeked and tossed
 Her beauteous hair about.

O DEAR ME !

HERE are crocuses, white, gold, grey !

‘ O dear me ! ’ says Marjorie May ;
Flat as a platter the blackberry blows :
‘ O dear me ! ’ says Madeleine Rose ;
The leaves are fallen, the swallows flown :
‘ O dear me ! ’ says Humphrey John ;
Snow lies thick where all night it fell :
‘ O dear me ! ’ says Emmanuel.

TARTARY

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
 Of beaten gold my throne ;
And in my court would peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
 Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Trumpeters every day
To every meal would summon me,
 And in my courtyard bray ;
And in the evening lamps should shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,
 Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
I'd wear a robe of beads,
White, and gold, and green they'd be—
And clustered thick as seeds ;
And ere should wane the morning-star,
I'd don my robe and scimitar,
And zebras seven should draw my car
Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,
Her rivers silver-pale !
Lord of the hills of Tartary,
Glen, thicket, wood, and dale !
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,
Her bird-delighting citron-trees
In every purple vale !

THE BUCKLE

I HAD a silver buckle,
I sewed it on my shoe,
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe
I danced the evening through !

I had a bunch of cowslips,
I hid them in a grot,
In case the elves should come by night
And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,
I tied it in my hair,
That, walking in the garden,
The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,
I laughed it near the wall :
Only the ivy and the wind
May tell of it at all.

THE HARE

IN the black furrow of a field
I saw an old witch-hare this night ;
And she cocked a lissome ear,
And she eyed the moon so bright,
And she nibbled o' the green ;
And I whispered ' Whsst ! witch-hare,'
Away like a ghostie o'er the field
She fled, and left the moonlight there.

BUNCHES OF GRAPES

‘ BUNCHES of grapes,’ says Timothy ;
‘ Pomegranates pink,’ says Elaine ;
‘ A junket of cream and a cranberry tart
For me,’ says Jane.

‘ Love-in-a-mist,’ says Timothy ;
‘ Primroses pale,’ says Elaine ;
‘ A nosegay of pinks and mignonette
For me,’ says Jane.

‘ Chariots of gold,’ says Timothy ;
‘ Silvery wings,’ says Elaine ;
‘ A bumpy ride in a wagon of hay
For me,’ says Jane.

JOHN MOULDY

I SPIED John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

He read no book, he snuffed no candle ;
The rats ran in, the rats ran out ;
And far and near, the drip of water
Went whispering about.

The dusk was still, with dew a-falling,
I saw the Dog-star bleak and grim,
I saw a slim brown rat of Norway
Creep over him.

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone ;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

THE FLY

How large unto the tiny fly
Must little things appear!—
A rosebud like a feather bed,
Its prickle like a spear;

A dewdrop like a looking-glass,
A hair like golden wire;
The smallest grain of mustard-seed
As fierce as coals of fire;

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill;
A wasp, a cruel leopard;
And specks of salt as bright to see
As lambkins to a shepherd.

SONG

O FOR a moon to light me home !

 O for a lanthorn green !

For those sweet stars the Pleiades,

That glitter in the darkling trees ;

 O for a lovelorn taper ! O

 For a lanthorn green !

O for a frock of tartan !

 O for clear, wild, grey eyes !

For fingers light as violets,

'Neath branches that the blackbird frets ;

 O for a thistly meadow ! O

 For clear, wild grey eyes !

O for a heart like almond boughs !

 O for sweet thoughts like rain !

O for first-love like fields of grey,

Shut April-buds at break of day !

 O for a sleep like music !

 Dreams still as rain !

I SAW THREE WITCHES

I saw three witches
That bowed down like barley,
And straddled their brooms 'neath a louring
sky,
And, mounting a storm-cloud,
Aloft on its margin,
Stood black in the silver as up they did fly.

I saw three witches
That mocked the poor sparrows
They carried in cages of wicker along,
Till a hawk from his eyrie
Swooped down like an arrow,
Smote on the cages, and ended their song.

I saw three witches
That sailed in a shallop,
All turning their heads with a smickering smile,

Till a bank of green osiers
Concealed their grim faces,
Though I heard them lamenting for many a
 mile.

I saw three witches
Asleep in a valley,
Their heads in a row, like stones in a flood,
Till the moon, creeping upward,
Looked white through the valley,
And turned them to bushes in bright scarlet
 bud.

THE SILVER PENNY

' SAILORMAN, I'll give to you
 My bright silver penny,
If out to sea you'll sail me
 And my dear sister Jenny.'

' Get in, young sir, I'll sail ye
 And your dear sister Jenny,
But pay she shall her golden locks
 Instead of your penny.'

They sail away, they sail away,
 O fierce the winds blew !
Wild the waves, wan the foam,
 Dark the night grew !

And all the green sea-water climbed
 Steep into the boat ;
Back to the shore again
 Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,
Drowned is sweet Jenny,
And drowned in the deep sea
A bright silver penny.

THE RAINBOW

I SAW the lovely arch
Of Rainbow span the sky,
The gold sun burning
As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude
The showery foliage shone
One lovely moment,
And the Bow was gone.

THE FAIRIES DANCING

I HEARD along the early hills,
Ere yet the lark was risen up,
Ere yet the dawn with firelight fills
The night-dew of the bramble-cup,—
I heard the fairies in a ring
Sing as they tripped a lilting round
Soft as the moon on wavering wing.
The starlight shook as if with sound,
As if with echoing, and the stars
Prankt their bright eyes with trembling
gleams ;
While red with war the gusty Mars
Rained upon earth his ruddy beams.
He shone alone, adown the West,
While I, behind a hawthorn-bush,
Watched on the fairies flaxen-tressed
The fires of the morning flush.

Till, as a mist, their beauty died,
Their singing shrill and fainter grew ;
And daylight tremulous and wide
Flooded the moorland through and through ;
Till Urdon's copper weathercock
Was reared in golden flame afar,
And dim from moonlit dreams awoke
The towers and groves of Arroar.

REVERIE

WHEN slim Sophia mounts her horse
And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
She paces to.

Each narrow hoof is lifted high
Beneath the dark enclustering pines,
A silver ray within his bit
And bridle shines.

His eye burns deep, his tail is arched,
And streams upon the shadowy air,
The daylight sleeks his jetty flanks,
His mistress' hair.

Her habit flows in darkness down,
Upon the stirrup rests her foot,
Her brow is lifted, as if earth
She heeded not.

'Tis silent in the avenue,
The sombre pines are mute of song,
The blue is dark, there moves no breeze
The boughs among.

When slim Sophia mounts her horse
And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
She paces to.

THE THREE BEGGARS

'TWAS autumn daybreak gold and wild,
While past St. Ann's grey tower they shuffled,
Three beggars spied a fairy-child
In crimson mantle muffled.

The daybreak lighted up her face
All pink, and sharp, and emerald-eyed ;
She looked on them a little space,
And shrill as hautboy cried :—

' O three tall footsore men of rags
Which walking this gold morn I see,
What will ye give me from your bags
For fairy kisses three ? '

The first, that was a reddish man,
Out of his bundle takes a crust :
' La, by the tombstones of St. Ann,
There's fee, if fee ye must ! '

The second, that was a chesnut man,
Out of his bundle draws a bone :
' La, by the belfry of St. Ann,
And all my breakfast gone ! '

The third, that was a yellow man,
Out of his bundle picks a groat,
' La, by the Angel of St. Ann,
And I must go without.'

That changeling, lean and icy-lipped,
Touched crust, and bone, and groat, and lo !
Beneath her finger taper-tipped
The magic all ran through.

Instead of crust a peacock pie,
Instead of bone sweet venison,
Instead of groat a white lylie
With seven blooms thereon.

And each fair cup was deep with wine :
Such was the changeling's charity,
The sweet feast was enough for nine,
But not too much for three.

O toothsome meat in jelly froze !
O tender haunch of elfin stag !
O rich the odour that arose !
O plump with scraps each bag !

There, in the daybreak gold and wild,
Each merry-hearted beggar man
Drank deep unto the fairy child,
And blessed the good St. Ann.

THE DWARF

' Now, Jinnie, my dear, to the dwarf be off,
That lives in Barberry Wood,
And fetch me some honey, but be sure you don't
laugh,—
He hates little girls that are rude, are rude,
He hates little girls that are rude.'

Jane tapped at the door of the house in the wood,
And the dwarf looked over the wall,
He eyed her so queer, 'twas as much as she
could
To keep from laughing at all, at all,
To keep from laughing at all.

His shoes down the passage came clod, clod, clod,
And when he opened the door,
He croaked so harsh, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from laughing the more, the more,
To keep from laughing the more.

As there, with his bushy red beard, he stood,
Pricked out to double its size,
He squinted so cross, 'twas as much as she could
To keep the tears out of her eyes, her eyes,
To keep the tears out of her eyes.

He slammed the door, and went clod, clod, clod,
But while in the porch she bides,
He squealed so fierce, 'twas as much as she
could
To keep from cracking her sides, her sides,
To keep from cracking her sides.

He threw a pumpkin over the wall,
And melons and apples beside,
So thick in the air that to see 'em all fall,
She laughed, and laughed, till she cried,
cried, cried,
Jane laughed and laughed till she cried.

Down fell her teardrops a pit-apat-pat,
And red as a rose she grew ;—
' Kah ! kah ! ' said the dwarf, ' is it crying you're
at ?
It's the very worst thing you could do, do, do,
It's the very worst thing you could do.'

He slipped like a monkey up into a tree,
 He shook her down cherries like rain ;
' See now,' says he, cheeping, ' a blackbird I be,
 Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again-gain-gain,
 Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again.'

Ah me ! what a strange, what a gladsome duet
 From a house in the deeps of a wood !
Such shrill and such harsh voices never met yet
 A-laughing as loud as they could, could,
 could,
 A-laughing as loud as they could.

Come Jinnie, come dwarf, cocksparrow, and
 bee,
There's a ring gaudy-green in the dell,
Sing, sing, ye sweet cherubs, that flit in the
 tree ;
La ! who can draw tears from a well, well,
 well,
Who ever drew tears from a well !

ALULVAN

THE sun is clear of bird and cloud,
The grass shines windless, grey and still,
In dusky ruin the owl dreams on,
The cuckoo echoes on the hill ;
Yet soft along Alulvan's walks
 The ghost at noonday stalks.

His eyes in shadow of his hat
Stare on the ruins of his house ;
His cloak, up-fasten'd with a brooch,
Of faded velvet grey as mouse,
Brushes the roses as he goes :
 Yet wavers not one rose.

The wild birds in a cloud fly up
From their sweet feeding in the fruit ;
The droning of the bees and flies
Rises gradual as a lute ;
Is it for fear the birds are flown,
 And shrills the insect-drone ?

Thick is the ivy o'er Alulvan,
And crisp with summer-heat its turf ;
Far, far across its empty pastures
Alulvan's sands are white with surf :
And he himself is grey as sea,
Watching beneath an elder-tree.

All night the fretful, shrill Banshee
Lurks in the ivy's dark festoons,
Calling for ever, o'er garden and river,
Through magpie changing of the moons :
‘ Alulvan, O, alas ! Alulvan,
The doom of lone Alulvan ! ’

THE PEDLAR

THERE came a Pedlar to an evening house ;
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking down,
Wondered what man he was, so curious
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown :
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering eyes,—
‘ What will you buy, sweetheart ?—Here’s
honeycomb,
And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry pies,
Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,
To keep in water for to make night sweet :
All that you want, sweetheart,—come, taste
and eat ! ’

Mocking, yet winsome, knelled that low voice on,
And Lettice looked and listened, sighed and
smiled ;
Her eyes with lustre lit, her round cheek wan,
Her small heart beating, by such wares beguiled.

Yet in that same small heart a whisper went,—
‘ Heed not the Stranger and his sugared song !
Only on evil are such pedlars bent :
His sweets are death.’ Yet, still how she doth
long

But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight !

‘ What must I pay ? ’ she whispered. ‘ Pay ! ’
says he,

‘ Pedlar I am who through this wood do roam,
One lock of hair is gold enough for me,
For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb ! ’
But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,
‘ Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him not ! ’
And many another woodland tongue beside
Rose softly in the silence—‘ Trust him not ! ’
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,
‘ What, in the thicket, is this idle noise ? ’

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her
wings,

As through the glade, dark in the dim, she flew ;
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings,—
‘ What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to you ? ’

Here's orange ribands, here's a string of pearls,
Here's silk of buttercup and pansy glove,
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove :
Come now,' he says, with dim and lifted face,
' I pass not often such a lonely place.'

' Pluck not a hair ! ' a hidden rabbit cried,
' With but one hair he'll steal thy heart away,
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide :
Go in ! all honest pedlars come by day.'

There was dead silence in the drowsy wood ;
' Here's syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep ;
And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food
All day thy heart in happiness to keep ' ;—
And now she takes the scissors on her thumb,—
' O, then, no more unto my lattice come ! '

Sad is the sound of weeping in the wood !
Now only night is where the Pedlar was ;
And bleak as frost upon a quickling bud
His magic steals in darkness, O alas !
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine ?
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold
Hid 'neath fresh new-pluckt sprigs of eglantine ?
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,

Sad to and fro in green and secret ways,
With solemn bells the burden of his days ?

And, in the market-place, what man is this
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,
Stuck heartwise ; and whose glassy flatteries
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest -
Who come to buy and gossip ? Doth his eye
Remember a face lovely in a wood ?
O people ! hasten, hasten, do not buy
His woful wares ; the bird of grief doth brood
There where his heart should be ; and far away
There mourns long sorrowfulness this happy
day.

THE OGRE

'Tis moonlight on Trebarwith Sands,
And moonlight on their seas,
Lone in a cove a cottage stands
Enclustered in with trees.

Snuffing its thin faint smoke afar
An Ogre prowls, and he
Smells supper, for where humans are,
Rich dainties too may be.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,
So to him staring down,
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,
With jasmine overgrown.

He snorted, as the billows snort
In darkness of the night,
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,
He glowered on the sight. .

Into the garden sweet with peas
He put his wooden shoe,
And bending back the apple trees
Crept covetously through ;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye
Stared through the lattice small,
And spied two children which did lie
Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell
Of his disastrous thumb
Groping discreet, and gradual,
Across the quiet room.

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot
Wherein these children lay,
As if his malice were forgot,
It suddenly did stay.

Faintly upon the quiet air
There fell a music sweet,
That stirred with fear his matted hair
And stayed his prowling feet.

For she who in the kitchen sat
Darning by the fire,
Guileless of what he would be at,
Sang sweet as wind or wire :—

‘ Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie ;
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,
This night remember thee !

‘ Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,
He deems them smoke to be ;
Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie ! ’

The Ogre lifted up his eyes
Into the moon’s pale ray,
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,
Cruel and clear as day ;

He snarled in gluttony and fear—
The wind blows dismally—
‘ Jesu in storm my lambs be near,
By-by, lullay, lullie ! ’

And like a ravenous beast which sees
The hunter's icy eye,
So did this wretch in wrath confess
Sweet Jesu's mastery.

With gaunt locks dangling, crouched he, then
Drew backward from his prey,
Through tangled apple-boughs again
He wrenched and rent his way.

Out on Trebarwith Sands he broke,
The waves yelled back his cry,
Gannet and cormorant echo woke
As he went striding by.

DAME HICKORY

‘ DAME HICKORY, Dame Hickory,
Here’s sticks for your fire,
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,
And beech-twigs, and briar ! ’

But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

‘ Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here’s meat for your broth,
Goose-flesh, and hare’s flesh,
And pig’s trotters both ! ’

But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

‘ Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here’s a wolf at your door,
His teeth grinning white,
And his tongue wagging sore ! ’

‘ Nay ! ’ said Dame Hickory, ‘ ye False Faerie !
But a wolf ’twas indeed, and famished was he.

' Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's buds for your tomb,
Bramble, and lavender,
And rosemary bloom ! '

' Whsst ! ' sighs Dame Hickory, ' ye False
Faerie,
Ye mock in my dreams, ye do, and trouble
poor me.'

THE PILGRIM

‘ SHALL we help you with your bundle,
 You old grey man ?
Over hill and dell and meadow
Lighter than an owlet’s shadow
We will waft it through the air,
Through blue regions shrill and bare
So you may in comfort fare—
Shall we help you with your bundle,
 You old grey man ? ’

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes
And saw three Fiends in the skies,
Stooping o’er that lonely place
 Evil in form and face.

‘ Nay,’ he answered, ‘ tempt me not,
 O three wild Fiends !
Long the journey I am wending,
Yet the longest hath an ending ;
I must bear my bundle alone
 Till the day be done.’

The Fiends stared down with leaden eye,
Fanning the chill air duskily,
'Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry :—

' Shall we smooth the path before you,
Weary old man ?

Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,
Strew it o'er with painted flowers,
Lure bright birds to sing and flit
In the honeyed airs of it ?

Shall we smooth the path before you,
Sad old man ? '

' O, 'tis better silence,
Ye three wild Fiends !

Footsore am I, faint and weary.
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary,
Even so, at peace I be
Nor want for ghostly company :
O, 'tis better silence,

Ye three wild Fiends ! '

It seemed a cloud obscured the air,
Lightning quivered in the gloom,
And a faint voice of thunder spake
Far in the high hill-hollows—' Come ! '

Then, half in fury, half in dread,
The Fiends drew closer down, and said :

' Nay, thou foolish fond old man,
Hearken awhile !

Frozen, scorched, with ice and heat,

Tarry now, sit down and eat :

Juice of purple grape shall be

Joy and solace unto thee.

Music of tambour, wire and wind,

Ease shall bring to heart and mind ;

Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh

Languishing and lullaby ;

Turn then ! Curse the dream that lures thee ;

Turn thee, ere too late it be,

Lest thy three true Friends grow weary

Of comforting thee ! '

The Pilgrim crouches terrified

At stooping hood, and glassy face,

Gloating, evil, side by side,

Terror and hate brood o'er the place ;

He flings his withered hands on high

With a bitter, breaking cry :—

' Pity have, and leave me, leave me,
Ye three wild Fiends !
If I lay me down in slumber
Dark with death that sleep shall be ;
All your fruits are fruits of evil—
Wrath and hate and treachery.
On mine eyes the darkness thickens,
Blind, in dread, I stumble on,
Cheat me not with false beguiling—
Beseech ye, begone ! '

And even as he spake, on high
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.
Bright streamed the rain. O'er burning snow
From hill to hill a wondrous Bow
Of colour and fire trembled in air,
Painting its heavenly beauty there.
Wild flung each Fiend a batlike hood
Against that flaming light, and stood
Beating the windless rain and then
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,
Circled in company again,
And into darkness fled.

Marvellous sweet it was to hear
The waters gushing loud and clear ;
Marvellous happy it was to be
Alone, and yet not solitary ;
Oh, out of terror and dark to come
In sight of Home !

THE GAGE

‘ LADY JANE, O Lady Jane !
Your hound hath broken bounds again,
And chased my timorous deer, O ;
If him I see,
That hour he’ll dee ;
My brakes shall be his bier, O.’

‘ Hoots ! lord, speak not so proud to me !
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,
He’s welcome to your deer, O ;
Shoot, shoot you may,
He’ll gang his way,
Your threats we nothing fear, O.’

He’s fetched him in, he’s laid him low,
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,
Darkens his dreary eye, O ;
‘ Here is your beast,
And now at least
My herds in peace shall lie, O.’

‘ “ In peace ! ” my lord, O mark me well !
For what my jolly hound befell
You shall sup twenty-fold, O !
 For every tooth
 Of his, i’sooth,
A stag in pawn I hold, O.

‘ Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,
Braying ‘em shrill and clear, O ;
 But lone and still
 Shall lift each hill,
Each valley wan and sere, O.

‘ Ride up you may, ride down you may,
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,
One ghost shall haunt you ever :
 Bird, beast, and game
 Shall dread the same,
The fish of lake and river.’

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,
Her eye with wrath and pity flows :
 He gazes fierce and round, O,—
 ‘ Dear Lord ! ’ he says,
 ‘ What loveliness
To waste upon a hound, O.

' I'd give my stags, my hills and dales,
My stormcocks and my nightingales
To have undone this deed, O ;
For deep beneath
My heart is death
Which for her love doth bleed, O.'

He wanders up, he wanders down,
On foot, a-horse, by night and noon :
His lands are bleak and drear, O ;
Forsook his dales
Of nightingales,
Forsook his moors of deer, O.

Forsook his heart, ah me ! of mirth ;
There's nothing gladsome left on earth :
All happy dreams seem vain, O,
Save where remote
The moonbeams gloat,
And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

But happed one eve alone he went,
Gnawing his beard in dreariment—
Lo ! from a thicket hidden,
Lovely as flower
In April hour,
Steps forth a form unbidden.

' Get ye now down, my lord, to me !
I'm troubled so I'm like to dee,'
She cries, 'twixt joy and grief, O ;
 ' The hound is dead,
 When all is said,
But love is past belief, O.

' Nights, nights I've lain your lands to see,
Forlorn and still—and all for me,
All for a foolish curse, O ;
Pride may be well,
 But truth to tell,
To live unlov'd is worse, O ! '

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,
Hears now a sweeter nightingale,
And lairs a tenderer deer, O ;
 His sorrow goes
 Like mountain snows
In waters sweet and clear, O !
And now, what hound is this that fleet
Comes fawning to his mistress' feet,
 And's bid forgive a master ?
 How swiftly love
 May grief remove,
How happy make disaster !

Ay, as it were a bud did break
To loveliness for pity's sake,
So she in beauty moving
Rides at his hand
Across his land,
Beloved as well as loving.

AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

As Lucy went a-walking one morning cold and
fine,

There sate three crows upon a bough, and three
times three is nine :

Then 'O !' said Lucy, in the snow, ' it's very
plain to see

A witch has been a-walking in the fields in
front of me.'

Then stept she light and heedfully across the
frozen snow,

And plucked a bunch of elder-twigs that near
a pool did grow :

And, by and by, she comes to seven shadows
in one place

Stretched black by seven poplar-trees against
the sun's bright face.

She looks to left, she looks to right, and in the
midst she sees

A little pool of water clear and frozen 'neath the
trees ;

Then down beside its margent in the crusty
snow she kneels,

And hears a magic belfry a-ringing with sweet
bells.

Clear sang the faint far merry peal, then silence
on the air,

And icy-still the frozen pool and poplars stand-
ing there :

Then lo ! as Lucy turned her head and looked
along the snow

She sees a witch—a witch she sees, come frisking
to and fro.

Her scarlet, buckled shoes they clicked, her
heels a-twinkling high ;

With mistletoe her steeple-hat bobbed as she
capered by ;

But never a dint, or mark, or print, in the
whiteness for to see,

Though danced she light, though danced she
fast, though danced she lissomely.

It seemed 'twas diamonds in the air, or little
flakes of frost ;

It seemed 'twas golden smoke around, or sun-
beams lightly tost ;

It seemed an elfin music like to reeds and
warblers rose :

' Nay ! ' Lucy said, ' it is the wind that through
the branches flows.'

And as she peeps, and as she peeps, 'tis no
more one, but three,

And eye of bat, and downy wing of owl within
the tree,

And the bells of that sweet belfry a-pealing as
before,

And now it is not three she sees, and now it is
not four.

' O ! who are ye,' sweet Lucy cries, ' that in a
dreadful ring,

All muffled up in brindled shawls, do caper,
frisk, and spring ? '

' A witch and witches, one and nine,' they
straight to her reply,

And looked upon her narrowly, with green and
needle eye.

Then Lucy sees in clouds of gold sweet cherry
trees upgrow,
And bushes of red roses that bloomed above
the snow ;
She smells all faint the almond-boughs blow-
ing so wild and fair,
And doves with milky eyes ascend fluttering in
the air.

Clear flowers she sees, like tulip buds, go float-
ing by like birds,
With wavering tips that warbled sweetly strange
enchanted words ;
And as with ropes of amethyst the twigs with
lamps were hung,
And clusters of green emeralds like fruit upon
them clung.

‘ O witches nine, ye dreadful nine, O witches
seven and three !

Whence come these wondrous things that I this
Christmas morning see ? ’

But straight, as in a clap, when she of Christmas
says the word,

Here is the snow, and there the sun, but never
bloom nor bird ;

Nor warbling flame, nor gloaming-rope of
amethyst there shows,
Nor bunches of green emeralds, nor belfry, well,
and rose,
Nor cloud of gold, nor cherry-tree, nor witch in
brindled shawl,
But like a dream which vanishes, so vanished
were they all.

When Lucy sees, and only sees three crows
upon a bough,
And earthly twigs, and bushes hidden white in
driven snow,
Then 'O!' said Lucy, 'three times three is
nine—I plainly see
Some witch has been a-walking in the fields in
front of me.'

THE ENGLISHMAN

I MET a sailor in the woods,
A silver ring wore he,
His hair hung black, his eyes shone blue,
And thus he said to me :—

‘ What country, say, of this round earth,
What shore of what salt sea,
Be this, my son, I wander in,
And looks so strange to me ? ’

Says I, ‘ O foreign sailorman,
In England now you be,
This is her wood, and there her sky,
And that her roaring sea.’

He lifts his voice yet louder,
‘ What smell be this,’ says he,
‘ My nose on the sharp morning air
Snuffs up so greedily ? ’

Says I, ' It is wild roses
Do smell so winsomely,
And winy briar too,' says I,
' That in these thickets be.'

' And oh ! ' says he, ' what leetle bird
Is singing in yon high tree,
So every shrill and long-drawn note
Like bubbles breaks in me ? '

Says I, ' It is the mavis
That perches in the tree,
And sings so shrill, and sings so sweet,
When dawn comes up the sea.'

At which he fell a-musing,
And fixed his eye on me,
As one alone 'twixt light and dark
A spirit thinks to see.

' England ! ' he whispers soft and harsh,
' England ! ' repeated he,
' And briar, and rose, and mavis,
A-singing in yon high tree.

‘ Ye speak me true, my leetle son,
So—so, it came to me,
A-drifting landwards on a spar,
And grey dawn on the sea.

‘ Ay, ay, I could not be mistook ;
I knew them leafy trees,
I knew that land so witcherie sweet,
And that old noise of seas.

‘ Though here I’ve sailed a score of years,
And heard ‘em, dream or wake,
Lap small and hollow ’gainst my cheek,
On sand and coral break ;

“ Yet now,” my leetle son, says I,
A-drifting on the wave,
“ That land I see so safe and green
Is England, I believe.

“ And that there wood is English wood,
And this here cruel sea,
The selfsame old blue ocean
Years gone remembers me,

“ “ A-sitting with my bread and butter
Down ahind yon chitterin’ mill ;
And this same Marinere ”—(that’s me),
“ Is that same leetle Will !—

“ “ That very same wee leetle Will
Eating his bread and butter there,
A-looking on the broad blue sea
Betwixt his yaller hair ! ”

‘ And here be I, my son, throwed up
Like corpses from the sea,
Ships, stars, winds, tempests, pirates past,
Yet leetle Will I be ! ’

He said no more, that sailorman,
But in a reverie
Stared like the figure of a ship
With painted eyes to sea.

THE FIDDLERS

NINEfeat Fiddlers had good Queen Bess
To play her music as she did dress.
Behind an arras of horse and hound
They sate there scraping delightsome sound.
Spangled, bejewelled, her skirts would she
Draw o'er a petticoat of cramasie ;
And soft each string like a bird would sing
In the starry dusk of evening.
Then slow from the deeps the crisscross bows,
Crooning like doves, arose and arose,
Till when, like a cage, her ladies did raise
A stiff rich splendour o'er her ribbed stays,
Like bumbling bees those four times nine
Fingers in melodies loud did pine ;
Till came her coif and her violet shoon
And her virgin face shone out like the moon :
Oh, then in a rapture those three times three
Fiddlers squealed shrill on their topmost C.

THE PHANTOM

SWIFTLY the hours of light have sped
In solitary play,
Now dark is fall'n, and supper's done,
And Ann good-night must say.

Beside her Grannie's chair she stands—
Oh, if she could but guess
How full of fear the old house seems
To Ann's small loneliness.

But Age is far away from Youth,
And near another sleep,
She nods a trembling gentle head,
And Ann to bed must creep.

Her eyes are yet with visions bright
Of sylph and river, flower and fay,
Now through a narrow corridor
She goes her lonely way.

Vast shadows on the heedless walls
Gigantic loom, stoop low :
Each little hasty footfall calls
Hollowly to and fro.

Now in the dark clear glass there moves
A taper, mocking hers,—
A phantom face of light blue eyes,
Reflecting phantom fears.

Around her loom the vacant rooms,
Wind the upward stairs,
She climbs on into a loneliness
Only her taper shares.

Out in the dark a cold wind stirs,
At every window sighs ;
A waning moon peers small and chill
From out the cloudy skies,

Casting faint tracery on the walls ;
So stony still the house
From cellar to attic rings the shrill
Squeak of the hungry mouse.

Ann scarce can hear or breathe, so fast
Her pent-up heart doth beat,
When, faint along the corridor,
Falleth the sound of feet :—

Sounds lighter than silk slippers make
Upon a ballroom floor, when sweet
Violin and 'cello wake
Music for twirling feet.

O ! 'neath an old unfriendly roof,
What shapes may not conceal
Their faces in the open day,
At night abroad to steal ?

Even her taper seems with fear
To languish small and blue ;
Far in the woods the winter wind
Runs whistling through.

A dreadful cold plucks at each hair,
Her mouth is stretched to cry,
But sudden, with a gush of joy,
It narrows to a sigh.

'Tis but a phantom child which steps
Soft through the corridor,
Singing an old forgotten song,
This ancient burden bore :—

' Thorn, thorn, I wis,
And roses twain,
A red rose and a white,
Stoop in the blossom, bee, and kiss
A lonely child good-night.

' Swim fish, sing bird,
And sigh again,
I that am lost am lone,
Bee in the blossom never stirred
Locks hid beneath a stone ! '—

Her eye was of the azure fire
That hovers in wintry flame ;
Her raiment wild and yellow as furze
That spouteth out the same ;

And in her hand she bore no flower,
But on her head a wreath
Of faded flowers that did yet
Smell sweetly after death. . . .

Gloomy with night the listening walls
Are now that she is gone,
Albeit this solitary child
No longer seems alone.

Fast though her taper dwindleth down,
Though black the shadows come,
A beauty beyond fear to dim
Haunts now her alien home.

And in that old, old house this spirit—
A child as lone as she—
Pining for love not found on earth,
Ann dreams again to see.

Seated upon her tapestry-stool,
Her fairy-book laid by,
She gazes into the fire, knowing
She hath sweet company.

And as each night to bed she goes,
Though sometimes fear may stir,
In her small heart, soon memory comes
And is her comforter.

THE MILLER AND HIS SON

A TWANGLING harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play the livelong day,
‘The Miller and his Son.’ . . .

‘The Miller went a-walking
All in the forest high,
He sees three doves a-flitting
Against the dark blue sky :

‘Says he, “My son, now follow
These doves so white and free,
That cry above the forest,
And surely cry to thee.”

“I go, my dearest Father,
But O ! I sadly fear,
These doves so white will lead me far,
But never bring me near.”

' He kisses the Miller,
He cries, " Awhoop to ye ! "
And straightway through the forest
Follows the wood-doves three.

' There came a sound of weeping
To the Miller in his Mill ;
Red roses in a thicket
Bloomed over near his wheel ;

' Three stars shone wild and brightly
Above the forest dim :
But never his dearest son
Returns again to him.

' The cuckoo shall call " Cuckoo ! "
In vain along the vale,
The linnet, and the blackbird,
The mournful nightingale ;

' The Miller hears and sees not,
A-thinking of his son ;
His toppling wheel is silent ;
His grinding done.

‘ “ Ye doves so white,” he weepeth,
“ Ye roses on the tree,
Ye stars that shine so brightly,
Ye shine in vain for me ! ”

‘ I bade him follow, follow,
He said, “ O Father dear,
These doves so white will lead me far
But never bring me near.” . . .

A twangling harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we’ll play the livelong day,
‘ The Miller and his Son.’

DOWN-ADOWN DERRY

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Gathering daisies
In the meadows of Doone,
Hears a shrill voice piping
Elflike and free
Where the waters go brawling
In rills to the sea ;
 Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon
Through the green grasses
Peeps softly ; and soon
Spies under green willows
A fairy whose song
Like the smallest of bubbles
Floats bobbing along ;
 Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry
Her cheeks were like wine,
Her eyes in her wee face
Like water-sparks shine,
Her niminy fingers
Her sleek tresses preen,
The which in the combing
She peeps out between ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Shrill, shrill was her tune :—
' Come to my water-house,
Annie Maroon,
Come in your dimity,
Ribbon on head,
To wear siller seaweed
And coral instead ' ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

' Down-adown-derry,
Lean fish of the sea,
Bring lanthorns for feasting
The gay Fäerie ;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

'Tis sand for the dancing,
A music all sweet
In the water-green gloaming
For thistledown feet ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon
Looked large on the fairy
Curled wan as the moon ;
And all the grey ripples
To the Mill racing by,
With harps and with timbrels
Did ringing reply ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

' Down-adown-derry,'
Sang the Fairy of Doone,
Piercing the heart
Of sweet Annie Maroon ;
And lo ! when like roses
The clouds of the sun
Faded at dusk, gone
Was Annie Maroon ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
The daisies are few ;
Frost twinkles powd'ry
In haunts of the dew ;
And only the robin
Perched on a thorn,
Can comfort the heart
Of a father forlorn ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Snow's on the air ;
Ice where the lily
Bloomed waxen and fair ;
He may call o'er the water,
Cry—cry through the Mill,
But Annie Maroon, alas !
Answer ne'er will ;
Singing down-adown-derry.

THE SUPPER

A WOLF he pricks with eyes of fire
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows,
 Seeking his prey,
 He pads his way
Where Jane benighted goes,
 Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,
 And lo ! he sees
 Beneath the trees
Where Jane's light footsteps go,
 Where Jane's light footsteps go,

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,
His five-clawed feet
Do scamper fleet
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,
 Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen
On a pure face of wilding rose,

Her amber eyes

In fear's surprise

Watch largely as she goes,

Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,
His lust it revels to and fro

Yet small beneath

A soft voice saith,

' Jane shall in safety go,

Jane shall in safety go.'

He lurched as if a fiery lash

Had scourged his hide, and through and through,

His furious eyes

O'erscanned the skies,

But nearer dared not go,

But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,

His fangs like spears in him uprose,

Ev'n to the town

Jane's flitting gown

He grins on as she goes,

He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,
He scampers, marvelling in his throes
 What brought him there
 To sup on air,
While Jane unarmèd goes,
While Jane unarmèd goes.

THE ISLE OF LONE

THREE dwarfs there were which lived in an
isle,

And the name of that isle was Lone,
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolyle,
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,
And pale as the Malmsey wine ;
Their bowls were three, and their beds were
three,
And their nightcaps white were nine.

Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,
Their combs of the tortoise's shell,
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the floor,
For light beamed a gobbet of wax ;
There were three wooden stools for whatever
they wore
On their humpity-dumpty backs.

So each would lie on a drowsy pillow
And watch the moon in the sky—
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,
The billow roar reply—

Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,
Amethyst, azure and green,
While apes in the palm trees did scramble and
clamber,
Hairy and hungry and lean.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten
The ocean cried under the moon,
Till ape and parrot too sleepy to listen
To sleep and slumber were gone.

Then from three small beds the dark hours'
while
In a house in the Island of Lone
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolye,
The snoring of Muziomone.

But soon as ever came peep of sun
On coral and feathery tree,
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would
run
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine to snare
Young foxes in the dells,
At noon in the shade on sweet fruits did fare,
And blew in their twisted shells.

Dark was the sea they gambolled in,
And thick with silver fish,
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin
To be a monarch's dish.

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,
Lit pale with flies of fire,
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,
And golden honeycomb
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,
Whipt light and white as foam.

Now Allioly where the sand-flower blows

 Taught three old apes to sing—

 Taught three old apes to dance on their toes

 And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked them
 sweet,

 They twirled them about and around,

To the noise of their voices they danced with
 their feet,

 They stamped with their feet on the ground.

But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,

 His parrot on his thumb,

And the twain they scritched in mockery,

 While the dancers go and come.

So, alas ! in the evening, rosy and still,

 Light-haired Lallerie

Bitterly quarrelled with Allioly

 By the yellow-sanded sea.

The rising moon swam sweet and large

 Before their furious eyes,

And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge

 Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone :
Clear in the clear green sea
Alliolyle lies not alone,
But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell plaintive notes ;
Ape, parraquito, bee
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats,—
The shoe of Lallerie.

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine,
Grey apes he dowers three,
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine
Seems sad as cypress-tree.

Three bowls he brims with sweet honeycomb
To feast the bumble bees,
Saying, ‘ O bees, be this your home,
For grief is on the seas ! ’

He sate him lone in a coral grot,
At the flowing in of the tide ;
When ebbed the billow, there was not,
Save coral, aught beside.

So hairy apes in three white beds,
And nightcaps, one and nine,
On moonlit pillows lay three heads
Bemused with dwarfish wine.

A tomb of coral, the dirge of bee,
The grey apes' guttural groan
For Alliolyte, for Lallerie,
For thee, O Muziomone !

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

THE scent of bramble fills the air,
 Amid her folded sheets she lies,
The gold of evening in her hair,
 The blue of morn shut in her eyes.

How many a changing moon hath lit
 The unchanging roses of her face !
Her mirror ever broods on it
 In silver stillness of the days.

Oft flits the moth on filmy wings
 Into his solitary lair ;
Shrill evensong the cricket sings
 From some still shadow in her hair.

In heat, in snow, in wind, in flood,
 She sleeps in lovely loneliness,
Half folded like an April bud
 On winter-haunted trees.

THE HORN

HARK ! is that a horn I hear,
In cloudland winding sweet—
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,
And silver-shod light feet ?

Is it the elfin laughter
Of fairies riding faint and high,
'Neath the branches of the moon,
Straying through the starry sky ?

Is it in the globèd dew
Such sweet melodies may fall ?
Wood and valley—all are still,
Hushed the shepherd's call.

CAPTAIN LEAN

OUT of the East a hurricane
Swept down on Captain Lean—
That mariner and gentleman
Will ne'er again be seen.

He sailed his ship against the foes
Of his own country dear,
But now in the trough of the billows
An aimless course doth steer.

Powder was violets to his nostrils,
Sweet the din of the fighting-line,
Now he is flotsam on the seas,
And his bones are bleached with brine.

The stars move up along the sky,
The moon she shines so bright,
And in that solitude the foam
Sparkles unearthly white..

This is the tomb of Captain Lean,
Would a straiter please his soul ?
I trow he sleeps in peace,
Howsoever the billows roll !

THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

His brow is seamed with line and scar ;
 His cheek is red and dark as wine ;
The fires as of a Northern star
 Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,
 Hangs open like an iron gin,
You stoop to see his pulses move,
 To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary
 In earnest thought he seems to stand,
As if across a lonely sea
 He gazed impatient of the land.

Out of the noisy centuries
 The foolish and the fearful fade ;
Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,
 Time hath not dimmed nor death dismayed.

HAUNTED

FROM out the wood I watched them shine,—
 The windows of the haunted house,
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,
 Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs
 Along the grey and crooked walks,—
A garden of thistledown and tares,
 Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,
 Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew ;
And black in silence to her mates
 A voiceless raven flew.

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,
 Green paths led lightly to its door,
Keen from her lair the spider leaned,
 And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,
The West shut down a heavy eye,
And like last tapers, few and wan,
The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

THE RAVEN'S TOMB

‘BUILD me my tomb,’ the Raven said,
‘Within the dark yew-tree,
So in the Autumn yewberries
Sad lamps may burn for me.
Summon the haunted beetle,
From twilight bud and bloom,
To drone a gloomy dirge for me
At dusk above my tomb.
Beseech ye too the glowworm
To rear her cloudy flame,
Where the small, flickering bats resort,
Whistling in tears my name.
Let the round dew a whisper make,
Welling on twig and thorn ;
And only the grey cock at night
Call through his silver horn.
And you, dear sisters, don your black
For ever and a day,
To show how true a raven
In his tomb is laid away.’

THE CHRISTENING

THE bells chime clear,
Soon will the sun behind the hills sink down ;
Come, little Ann, your baby brother dear
Lies in his christening-gown.

His godparents
Are all across the fields stepped on before,
And wait beneath the crumbling monuments,
This side the old church door.

Your mammie dear
Leans frail and lovely on your daddie's arm ;
Watching her chick, 'twixt happiness and fear,
Lest he should come to harm.

All to be blest
Full soon in the clear heavenly water, he
Sleeps on unwitting of't, his little breast
Heaving so tenderly.

I carried you,

My little Ann, long since on this same quest,
And from the painted windows a pale hue
Lit golden on your breast ;

And then you woke,

Chill as the holy water trickled down,
And, weeping, cast the window a strange look,
Half smile, half infant frown.

I scarce could hear

The larks a-singing in the green meadows,
'Twas summertide, and, budding far and near,
The hedges thick with rose.

And now you're grown

A little girl, and this same helpless mite
Is come like such another bud half-blown,
Out of the wintry night.

Time flies, time flies !

And yet, bless me ! 'tis little changed am I ;
May Jesu keep from tears those infant eyes,
Be love their lullaby !

THE FUNERAL

THEY dressed us up in black,
Susan and Tom and me ;
And, walking through the fields
All beautiful to see,
With branches high in the air
And daisy and buttercup,
We heard the lark in the clouds,—
In black dressed up. .

They took us to the graves,
Susan and Tom and me,
Where the long grasses grow
And the funeral tree :
We stood and watched ; and the wind
Came softly out of the sky
And blew in Susan's hair,
As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,
Tom and Susan and me,
And we sat in the nursery together,
And had our tea.
And, looking out of the window,
I heard the thrushes sing ;
But Tom fell asleep in his chair,
He was so tired, poor thing.

THE MOTHER BIRD

THROUGH the green twilight of a hedge
I peered, with cheek on the cool leaves pressed,
And spied a bird upon a nest :
Two eyes she had beseeching me
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast
Throbb'd hot and quick above her heart ;
And then she oped her dagger bill,—
'Twas not a chirp, as sparrows pip
At break of day ; 'twas not a trill,
As falters through the quiet even ;
But one sharp solitary note,
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,
One passionate note of victory :
Off, like a fool afraid, I sneaked,
Smiling the smile the fool smiles best,
At the mother bird in the secret hedge
Patient upon her lonely nest.

THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

I PRYTHEE, Nurse, come smooth my hair,
And prythee, Nurse, unloose my shoe,
And trimly turn my silken sheet
Upon my quilt of gentle blue.

My pillow sweet of lavender
Smooth with an amiable hand,
And may the dark pass peacefully by
As in the hour-glass droops the sand.

Prepare my cornered manchet sweet,
And in my little crystal cup
Pour out the blithe and flowering mead
That forthwith I may sup.

Withdraw my curtains from the night,
And let the crispèd crescent shine
Upon my eyelids while I sleep,
. And soothe me with her beams benign.

Dark looks the forest far-away ;
O, listen ! through its empty dales
Rings from the solemn echoing boughs
The music of its nightingales.

Now quench my silver lamp, prythee,
And bid the harpers harp that tune
Fairies which haunt the meadowlands
Sing clearly to the stars of June.

And bid them play, though I in dreams
No longer heed their pining strains,
For I would not to silence wake
When slumber o'er my senses wanes.

You Angels bright who me defend,
Enshadow me with curvèd wing,
And keep me in the darksome night
Till dawn another day do bring.

THE CHILD IN THE STORY AWAKES

THE light of dawn rose on my dreams,
And from afar I seemed to hear
In sleep the mellow blackbird call
Hollow and sweet and clear.

I prynthee, Nurse, my casement open,
Wildly the garden peals with singing,
And hooting through the dewy pines
The goblins of the dark are winging.

O listen the droning of the bees,
That in the roses take delight !
And see a cloud stays in the blue
Like an angel still and bright.

The gentle sky is spread like silk,
And, Nurse, the moon doth languish there,
As if it were a perfect jewel
In the morning's soft-spun hair.

The greyness of the distant hills
Is silvered in the lucid East,
See, now the sheeny-plumèd cock
Wags haughtily his crest.

' O come you out, O come you out,
Lily, and lavender, and lime ;
The kingcup swings his golden bell,
And plumpy cherries drum the time.'

O come you out, O come you out !
Roses, and dew, and mignonette,
The sun is in the steep blue sky,
Sweetly the morning star is set.'

THE LAMPLIGHTER

WHEN the light of day declineth,
And a swift angel through the sky
Kindleth God's tapers clear,
With ashen staff the lamplighter
Passeth along the darkling streets
To light our earthly lamps ;

Lest, prowling in the darkness,
The thief should haunt with quiet tread,
Or men on evil errands set ;
Or wayfarers be benighted ;
Or neighbours bent from house to house
Should need a guiding torch.

He is like a needlewoman
Who deftly on a sable hem
Stitches in gleaming jewels ;
Or, haply, he is like a hero,
Whose bright deeds on the long journey
Are beacons on our way..

THE LAMPLIGHTER

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And when in the East cometh morning,
And the broad splendour of the sun,
Then, with the tune of little birds
Ringing on high, the lamplighter
Passeth by each quiet house,
And putteth out the lamps.

I MET AT EVE

I MET at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
 Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,
About his brows a poppy-wreath
Burned like dim coals, and everywhere
 The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before
 Seemed letters of his lovely name.

His house is in the mountain ways,
A phantom house of misty walls,
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,
 And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,
There flit the hoot-owl's silent wings,
There hath his web the silkworm wound.

Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,
And rosy, as with morning buds,
Along his dales of broom and birk
Dreams haunt his solitary woods.

I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

LULLABY

SLEEP, baby, sleep !
The little mouse cheeps plaintively,
The nightingale in the chesnut-tree—
They sing together, bird and mouse,
In starlight, in darkness, lonely, sweet,
The wild notes and the faint notes meet—
Sleep, baby, sleep !

Sleep, baby, sleep !
Amid the lilies floats the moth,
The mole along his galleries goeth
In the dark earth ; the summer moon
Looks like a shepherd through the pane
Seeking his feeble lamb again—
Sleep, baby, sleep !

Sleep, baby, sleep !

Time comes to keep night-watch with thee,

Nodding with roses ; and the sea

Saith ' Peace ! Peace ! ' amid his foam.

' O be still ! '

The wind cries up the whispering hill—

Sleep, baby, sleep !

ENVOY

CHILD, do you love the flower
Ashine with colour and dew
Lighting its transient hour ?

So I love you.

The lambs in the mead are at play,
'Neath a hurdle the shepherd's asleep,
From height to height of the day
The sunbeams sweep.

Evening will come. And alone
The dreamer the dark will beguile ;
All the world will be gone
For a dream's brief while.

Then I shall be old ; and away :
And you, with sad joy in your eyes,
Will brood over children at play
With as loveful surmise.



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